

WEEKAPAUG FIRE DISTRICT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

November 30, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 AM by Moderator Doug Randall. Those in attendance were Doug Randall, Jim Maynard and Emily Mugge, officers of the Weekapaug Fire District; Commissioners Tom Dwyer and Howard Hyde; Members-at-Large attending were Carol Carmody, Amy Carvel, Gale Hunt, Sue Lester and Dan Richards. Also attending were former Moderator Rick Constantine, former Board Member Lang Heminway, and WFD attorney Deming Sherman. In addition, Gina Breakstone, Chair of the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation (WFC), Michael Sands, trustee of the WFC, and Hank White, architect, also attended for the first part of the meeting. Those absent were Ed Fuller, Frank Kinney, Susie Mackay, Peter Seidenberg and Scott Wakeman.

The Minutes of the August 2013 meeting were approved

Presentation by the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation: Michael Sands and Gina Breakstone, trustees of the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation, and Hank White, architect, presented plans for proposed changes to the Innlet parking lot for both safety and appearance purposes. The Foundation asked for feedback from the WFD because the WFD has oversight for the Innlet, and because it would be impossible to make changes without impacting the WFD

parking lot.

The WFC will fund the cost of the changes to the Innlet.

Proposed changes include:

Separate and clarify as much as possible car, bike and pedestrian paths. The clarification of the separate paths will be accomplished through the use of different materials, such as firm aggregate, crushed oyster shells, and asphalt. This change will increase the safety of the children who patronize the Innlet.

Eliminate bike racks from the front of the Innlet; provide bike racks in front of the fence on the north of the WFD offices.

Add landscaping and customer seating in the front of the Innlet to improve the appearance of the Innlet

Improve tenant access to the freezer

Improve tenant access and storage for trash

Upgrade the appearance of the building by adding shingles, shutters, window boxes and/or other architectural features

Move the Farmer's Market to the septic field at the back of the Innlet, which will provide more space to vendors and better parking and access for customers.

WFD asked the following questions:

How long will this project take? The Foundation said that the estimated date of completion is Memorial Day. The date may change if discussions with the town concerning curb cuts are delayed or work cannot be scheduled promptly.

Has anyone taken the plans to the CRMC? Past experience indicates

that this is a repair project, not new construction. The town will advise the Foundation if it is necessary to take the plans to the CRMC.

Members of the WFD expressed concerns about the following:

The initial plan to put the bikes in front of the fence on the side of the WFD office building will not work as WFD's truck and/or boat use the area behind the fence for parking. The fence must be moveable and cannot be blocked to allow access.

Maintenance of the different materials delineating car parking from pedestrian pathways requires sweeping and raking at least once every day. Who will be responsible for that?

The parking lots must be plowed during the winter, and the different materials may cause problems.

The trees proposed for the front of the Innlet will lose leaves in the fall. New landscaping will require ongoing maintenance. It is unclear who will provide and pay for the maintenance.

The trees in front of the Innlet may block water views for some residents.

The Foundation has assumed the financial responsibility for all the proposed work on the Innlet. WFD asked if it were possible for the Foundation to assume responsibility for ongoing maintenance for both the Innlet and WFD properties. The Foundation's trustees had to leave the meeting before this question arose and no answer was available.

The WFD agreed that the District needed to provide immediate feedback to the Foundation. The feedback should include the following points/questions.

- 1) The bike racks cannot remain as proposed.**
- 2) Placement of the new trees in the front of the Innlet should be studied carefully to avoid blocking anyone's views. Alternative suggestions included selecting trees that do not grow above a certain height, or choosing low-growing shrubs instead of trees.**
- 3) The WFD requires that the Foundation define who will maintain the different surfaces delineating parking, biking and walking paths, and who will maintain the landscaping on both the Innlet and the WFD properties.**

It was moved, seconded and approved that we provide preliminary approval to the Foundation's proposal subject to the following concerns:

Satisfactory consideration and responses by the Foundation to the 3 points listed above

**No major changes to be made to the proposal as presented today
WFD is given the ability to approve the final plans prior to implementation**

Frank Kinney is on the Foundation's committee, and it was agreed that WFD would ask him to keep us updated on the progress of the WFC plan.

The Committee also agreed to thank the Foundation for putting together an excellent plan to improve the safety of our children and the appearance of the Innlet.

In the midst of the discussion of the Foundation's proposal, it was noted that any changes to the Innlet should complement the WFD offices and vice versa. That comment sparked a discussion of repairs and changes to the WFD offices. Rot has been found in the front windows and the windows should be replaced. We have funds available to handle the repairs.

However, that may mean that the appearance of the WFD offices may change.

On a more comprehensive note, for several years, Howard has encouraged the WFD to replace the building's current boiler and install a more effective heating system, which is an expensive project. A discussion of repair vs. replace the building followed, and it was agreed that the building serves the WFD well, particularly as far as space is concerned. Therefore, it was agreed that the WFD will continue to repair rather than tear down and replace. It was also agreed that the building should not change in appearance. Further, we were assured that the porch has recently been rebuilt, and that the porch and steps should remain as is.

Finally, there were questions concerning the move of the Farmer's Market from the WFD parking lot to the open lawn behind the Innlet. Does the WFD need a rental agreement with the Innlet to use the open

lawn? Would the WFD have to provide maintenance or insurance for the use of the lawn? These items should be checked before plans are finalized.

Treasurer's Report/Tax Assessor's Report: Jim Maynard reported that the budget is playing out as had been planned.

98% of the taxes due have been collected. The WFD has \$434K in cash and \$360K in reserves.

Jim and Frank are working on a long term capital budget to help us prioritize the projects we want to undertake: beach conservation, road repair, replacement of office windows, installation of a new heating system, purchase of new equipment, and/or new vehicles, and expected future storm damage.

WFD has built up its reserve over time, but the reserve funds took a hit from Storm Sandy. There were suggestions on how to raise reserves. WFD has not asked for a special assessment in the past, but that may be one option, if necessary. It was suggested that an initial assessment be voluntary rather than obligatory if the WFD decides to exercise that option.

A concern discussed in past WFD meetings was a proposed law to cap future tax increases in Fire Districts at 4% per assessment. That law did not pass. The 4% cap exists for municipalities but Fire Districts are exempt. On the other hand, a Fire District in Rhode Island is now in receivership and repercussions from that are unknown.

Jim thanked Frank for focusing on the development of a well-crafted

capital budget.

Commissioners' Reports:

BEACH: Scott Wakeman reported via email. Because Tom Gulluscio took over day to day supervision of the life guards, overtime for the Beach Commission came in \$2300 under budget.

Scott will begin the search for life guards in mid-January.

Scott would like to put up a winter fence on the Inn Beach. He asked CRMC for permission and was told that permission to do so falls to US Fish and Wildlife Agency (USF&W), which has jurisdiction over the plover population. No plovers nest near the Inn Beach, and Scott is working to gain approval. Scott believes that snow fencing on the beach does not constitute construction on a barrier beach.

PUBLIC SAFETY: Tom Dwyer (Tom D) reported that Public Safety expense is coming within or slightly under budget for the year.

Tom outlined his priorities for 2014.

1) Bar coding on parking stickers to help security work with the community. This would help identify who is using the parking lot and who is not. If bar coding on the parking stickers is effective, then Tom would like to apply the technology to beach buttons.

2) The WFD truck is rotting away and needs to be replaced.

3) Tom Gulluscio (Tom G.) has not had a raise in the last couple of years. Tom G. took on the day to day responsibility of supervising the life guards and saved the WFD \$2300. Tom D. proposed that Tom G's. raise be equal to the amount saved. The raise would go into

effect in June 2014 and would be included in the 2015 budget.

Tom D. was asked about Tom G.s hours during the off season. Tom G. tours the Fire District 2 hours every day, and the hours are at his discretion. Tom G. is away all December. If we want coverage for December, then we would have to pay someone to take over.

Tom D. will work with Jim to assess a bonus and a raise for Tom G. and will also work on writing up protocols for winter procedures.

PUBLIC WORKS: Howard Hyde reported that the snow plowing contract is in place. Snow fences on Fenway are up, and a lot of sand has accumulated. Howard would like to put snow fences up on the Inn Beach as well. The Weekapaug Foundation gave the WFD \$6500, and the snow fences at Fenway cost about \$3K. Howard would like to take the balance and apply that towards installing snow fences on the Inn Beach. If snow fences are not allowed on the Inn Beach, then Howard would use the funds for a major planting of dune grass.

Rocky's Tree Service will trim trees on private roads on December 6. Anything that hangs over the street will be pruned.

Howard will fix the drain by the tennis courts and redo the street in the spring. In addition, Howard will replace as much roadwork as possible in the spring.

QBCC: Scott reported in via email, which is attached.

MARINA UPDATE: At this time, Lang has no plans to dredge this year. Instead, Lang suggested that WFD wait to see if the Army

Corps of Engineers will clean out the elbow just past the Marina in Winnapaug, in addition to other proposed work in the pond. If so, the water flow by the Marina might be affected, the situation at the Marina might be alleviated, and dredging will not be needed.

WEEKAPAUG GREEN REPORT: Each year, Weekapaug Green focuses on a theme to educate the community. Suggestions for next year are the collapse of bee colonies, or the status of the Monarch butterfly. Gale asked everyone to send suggestions of speakers on these topics to her.

OLD BUSINESS:

BEACH RENOVATION PRESERVATION COMMITTEE: Because time was short, Rick noted that there had been extensive discussion of the beach previously at this meeting, and that he would defer to other agenda topics.

WFD BROCHURE AND CUSTOMS: A committee was established in the August 2013 WFD meeting to respond to concerns about noise, trash, dogs, trimming bushes, speeding and other “good neighbor” issues. The committee members, Amy, Gale, Howard, Sue and Peter, held a telephone conference to create a “code of conduct”. The Committee put together a document outlining Weekapaug customs which is attached. In addition, the committee found an old brochure written by Jim Duff which served as a good jumping off point for an updated brochure describing Weekapaug’s history, resources and

organizations. The Committee reworked the former brochure and worked with the leaders of all the Weekapaug committees to ensure that the information included was complete and correct. Amy asked that we all read both the customs document and the updated brochure and provide feedback to the Committee by Jan 15 (formerly Feb. 1, but subsequently changed). The committee expects that the information will be ready for publication in the late spring. The WFD felt that both the customs document and the brochure are valuable information for our residents and guests, and that WFD should distribute both widely. It was suggested that WFD include the information in the Moderator's letter to the community and be available at the District offices during beach button pickup in the late spring. It was also agreed that the information should be included in the Weekapaug website.

NEW BUSINESS:

NOPEIS ISLAND LEASE: Deming Sherman presented a Summary of Proposed Lease Agreement and Management Plan: Nopes Island Conservation Associate (NICA) and US Fish and Wildlife (USF&W) drawn up 2 years ago (attached). Nopes Island voted to proceed with the lease and management plan to allow the USF&W to manage its property in a more general way than permitted under the previous Memo of Understanding, which covered only protection of least terns and piping plovers. NICA has been pleased with the relationship with USF&W.

Now, Nopes believes that the agreement would be more effective if

other owners of the beach, of which WFD is the largest, sign a similar agreement. NICA and WFD constitute about 85 to 90% of the barrier beach.

If WFD joined NICA, USF&W would provide a consistent management plan for the entire barrier beach covering erosion, wildlife and marsh areas. It would provide greater enforcement of vehicles near the beaches. Expense would be borne by the USF&W. On the other hand, there would be some loss of control, although the laws and regulations that the USF&W enforces would be negotiated by WFD, NICA and USF&W. A lease would not affect any sandtrail agreements in place or any existing contracts or rights. The lease would be in effect for 2 years. Cancellation by either party is allowed at any time during the 2 years with 90 days notice.

In Deming's assessment, the upside is huge and the downside is minor.

Deming asked if we wanted to look further into entering into an agreement with the USF&W.

WFD agreed that we are interested, and that Deming will report back to us in future meetings.

Deming also updated the WFD concerning the litigation between Nopes Island and RIMS concerning RIMS access to the Crandall property via Nopes Island. The original ruling allowing RIMS to cross NICA property was denied on appeal. RIMS has since dropped pursuing the issue.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be via email in

April. The information will be informational only; no votes will be taken. Notice of the meeting will be posted to avoid any issues concerning open meeting laws.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 AM.

Respectfully Submitted

Emily M. Mugge, Secretary